

New law, relative to Dept. of Environmental Quality, provides that any public record maintained by the department may be kept in any written, photographic, microfilm, or other similar form or method, or may be kept by any magnetic, electronic, optical, or similar form of data compilation which is approved for such use in a rule promulgated by the department.

New law further prohibits approval of any such magnetic, electronic, optical, or similar form of data compilation unless it provides reasonable safeguards against erasure or alteration. Permits the department, at its discretion, to cause any public record maintained by it or any part thereof to be microfilmed, or otherwise reproduced, in order to accomplish efficient storage and preservation of such records.

New law provides that a certified copy of a public record maintained by the department shall be deemed to be an original for all purposes, and shall be admissible in evidence in all courts or administrative agencies as if it were the original.

New law authorizes electronic signatures, subject to department guidelines and limitations, and requires the department to promulgate rules to regulate the use of electronic signatures. Such rules may contain the following: (1) limitations upon which documents may be signed electronically and (2) security requirements, which may include but not be limited to (a) the use of alphanumeric or similar codes, fingerprints, or other identifying methods; (b) prohibitions against disclosure of codes or other identifiers to other persons; and (c) responsibility of individuals for unauthorized signatures.

Effective upon signature of governor (June 16, 1999).

(Adds R.S. 30:2043)